R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS TOWARD THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR.

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A LIKERT-TYPE ATTITUDE SCALE WAS CONSTRUCTED TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN DUGAN'S DISTINCTION OF TWO VIEWS OF COUNSELOR ROLE AS A SPECIALIST AND AS A GENERALIST. IN A PILOT STUDY, RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT WAS ESTABLISHED AT .90. USABLE RETURNS OF THE ATTITUDE SCALE WERE RECEIVED FROM 291 ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION (ACES) MEMBERS, 289 AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION (ASCA) MEMBERS, 287 AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS (AASA) MEMBERS, AND 74 MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) DIVISION 16. A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS ON THE TOTAL TEST SCORE INDICATED THAT SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS SCORED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE IN THE GENERALIST DIRECTION THAN ACES MEMBERS OR EVEN ASCA MEMBERS. HOWEVER, THEY DID NOT SEE THE COUNSELOR AS A GENERALIST AS MUCH AS THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS DID. SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS TENDED TO EMPHASIZE THE GENERALIST ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNSELORS SUCH AS BEING INSTITUTION-RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL-CENTERED, BEING INFORMATION GIVERS RATHER THAN DOING PERSONAL AND EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING, AND PRESENTING AN EDUCATIONAL RATHER THAN A PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT. THIS SHOWS AN INCLINATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS TOWARD ROLE DIFFERENTIATION AND POINTS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF FRICTION BETWEEN COUNSELORS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS RESULTING FROM ROLE PERCEPTION DIFFICULTIES. THIS SPEECH WAS DELIVERED AT THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION (SESSION 197, WASHINGTON, D.C., APRIL 5, 1966). (PS)

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Session 197

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Title - A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS TOWARD THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

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In a previous study (1) attitudes of counselor educators, guidance supervisors, secondary school counselors and administrators toward the counselor's role were compared. It was found that those with extensive training (coursework) tended to see the counselor as a specialist in counseling more than those with less training and that those with extensive secondary school experience tended to see the counselor as a generalist more than those with less experience. This study is an attempt to compare the attitudes of school psychologists (APA - Div. 16 members) with those of the above groups. On the basis of training and experience, school psychologists would be expected to be similar to counselor educators in their attitudes but this expectation was not supported by the data. This result is interpreted as an attempt by school psychologists to maintain their own role identity.

Background of Study

In the school situation it is important that open communication exist among the various specialists. Yet, there are situations in which conflicts arise because of confusion of roles. The roles of the school psychologist and the school counselor tend to overlap in some areas so it would seem important to investigate the attitudes of school psychologists toward the counselor's role and to define the elements involved in these attitudes. It would also be profitable to investigate the attitudes of counselors toward the role of the school psychologist but such an investigation is beyond the scope of this study.

Attitudes toward the counselor's role may be thought of as belonging to a generalist position or a specialist position. Individuals who define the counselor's role from a generalist position perceive the counselor as performing many diverse activities, while those who view the counselor as a specialist would restrict markedly the range of his activities. Dugan (1) defines the generalist as the counselor who gives priority to much functions as orientation, group guidance, registration, class scheduling, course changes, cumulative record development, testing and other appraisal,

CG 000 096

special class placement, scholarship and college application information and procedures, etc., in addition to some counseling. He defines the specialist as the counselor who gives the counseling service priority over all other activities, and, ideally, as one who performs the counseling service exclusively. Although the terms "generalist" and "specialist" are not often used explicitly, the two viewpoints and the attitudes connected with them can be detected in much of the literature dealing with counselor role.

Procedures

An attitude scale was constructed to differentiate between the generalist and specialist viewpoints. The items were Likert-type in that the subjects were requested to respond to the statements in the following manner: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. They were also written in such a manner that each item had a generalist direction and a specialist direction. Thus, if a person responded in the generalist direction, he was, in effect, denying the specialist direction for that particular item.

In order to insure that the items reflected generalist and specialist viewpoints and that they could be scored in terms of these viewpoints, 10 members of the guidance and counseling staff at Purdue University were requested to classify 137 items as "generalist", "specialist", or "?". Items on which at least 7 out of 10 judges agreed were accepted for use in the final attitude scale if the other judges had answered with a "?" response. Items about which there was any disagreement (such as one judge labeling an item as "specialist" and the other 9 labeling it as "generalist") were rejected. This resulted in an 80 item attitude scale.

The items on the final form were presented in a random order. In addition, the pages on which the items were presented were randomized. In order to make some allowance for social desirability and acquiescence, each item was designed in such a way as to appear socially desirable and to elicit an "agree" response. This was accomplished by avoiding very extreme statements concerning counselor role.

A pilot study was conducted in which the 80 items were administered to 9 members of the Purdue University counselor education staff and 28 Advanced NDEA Counseling Institute participants. Institute students scored in the generalist direction significantly more so (.001 level) than did the staff. Using Hoyt's analysis of variance method (2), the estimate of reliability for the pilot study was found to be .90.

The attitude scale was then submitted to a random sample of 500 members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, 500 members of the American School Counselor Association, and 500 members of the American Association of School Administrators. Usable returns were received from 291 (58 per cent) ACES members 289 (58 per cent) ASCA members, and 287 (57 per cent) AASA members. Chi square comparisons demonstrated that the respondents from each group were representative of the total membership of their respective organizations in regard to age and sex. Later the scale was administered to a random sample of 123 members of Division 16 of the American Psychological Association. Usable returns were received from 74 (60 per cent).

The 80 items were each given a score of 0 to 4, depending upon the direction of the response as previously determined by the judges. The specialist direction was represented by the lower scores (a perfect specialist score would be 0, and a perfect

generalist score would be 320). Factor analysis was used to arrive at an empirical grouping of the items which provided a further basis of comparison among the different professional groups. This analysis resulted in five factors and a factor score for each factor was obtained by adding the scores for all items comprising that factor. Thus the groups were compared on the basis of total score and on each of the five factor scores. Hoyt's analysis of variance method (2), based upon a random sample of 50 respondents, resulted in the following reliability coefficients: generalist-specialist total score .92; Factor I (administrative responsibilities) .82; Factor II (philosophical orientation) .72; Factor III (discipline committment) .83; Factor IV (clinical emphasis) .84; and Factor V (type of student contact) .47. Because negative factor loadings appeared on Factor V, the reliability coefficient may be an underestimate. The groups (counselor educators, school counselors and school administrators) were subdivided on the basis of training and experience in respect to the total score and each of the factor scores for comparative purposes. In this study the scores of the school psychologists are compared to the scores of the above named groups.

Results

Table I presents the results obtained for each of the groups on total attitude scale score. In the previous study ( ), when ACES members and ASCA members were

TABLE I
A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS ON TOTAL TEST SCORE (SPECIALIST-GENERALIST)*

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision N=291	152.8	30.7
Members of the American School Counselor Association N=289	158.8	26.6
Members of the American Psychological Association - Division of School Psychology N=74	165.5	23.6
Members of the American Association of School Administrators N=287	183.9	24.4

* Low score tends to specialist position; high score to generalist position.

separated according to training and experience, significant differences (at least at the .05 level) were found, those with more extensive training tending to a specialist position and those with more secondary school experience tending to a generalist position. On the basis of these results, we would expect school psychologists to have the same attitudes as ACES members since their training and experience is more similar to this group than to any other. Yet, Table I indicates that school psychologists scored significantly more in the generalist direction than ACES members and even ASCA members. However, they did not see the counselor as a generalist as much as school administrators did. Two-tailed t-tests were used in all comparisons since no prediction was made as to the relative position of school psychologists and differences reported were significant at at least the .05 level. Thus, school psychologists tend to see the counselor as a generalist significantly more than counselor educators and counselors themselves but not as much as school administrators.

Table 2 shows the scores of the various groups on Factor I (administrative responsibilities.) High scores indicate a broad role definition, emphasizing administrative duties as part of the counselor's role. In the previous study ( ), it was noted

TABLE 2

A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS ON FACTOR I SCORE (ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES)*

	Mean	Standard Deduction
Members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision N=291	47.0	12.2
Members of the American Psychological Association - Division of School Psychology N=74	52.8	9.4
Members of the American School Counselor Association N=289	53.6	10.1
Members of the American Association of School Administrators N=287	59.5	8.5

* Low score tends to narrow role definition; high score to broad role definition.

that those with more training tended to a narrow role definition whereas those with more secondary school experience tended to a broad role definition. On this factor, school psychologists defined the counselor's administrative functions in a manner similar to counselors themselves and in a way different from counselor educators and supervisors. The ACES members limited the administrative responsibilities of the counselor significantly more than ASCA members or Division 16 members. Again, school administrators favored a broad role definition significantly more than the other groups.

Table 3 shows the scores of the various groups on Factor II (philosophical orientation). High scores tend to a view of the counselor as a somewhat authoritarian,

TABLE 3

A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS ON FACTOR II SCORE (PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION)*

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of the American School Counselor Association N=289	14.1	5.2
Members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision N=291	15.7	5.8
Members of the American Psychological Association - Division of School Psychology N=74	17.0	4.7
Members of the American Association of School Administrators N=287	20.1	5.7

* Low scores tends to non-authoritarian, student-centered, full-time counselor; high score to somewhat authoritarian, institution-covered, part-time counselor.

somewhat institution-centered, part-time counselor whereas low scores tend to a view of the counselor as a somewhat non-authoritarian, somewhat student-centered, full time counselor. On this factor, school psychologists tended to see the counselor as being more authoritarian, more institution centered and part-time then did counselor educators and supervisors and counselors themselves. Again, they did not emphasize this position as much as school administrators.

Table 4 shows the scores of the various groups on Factor III (discipline commitment). High scores tend to an educational viewpoint, emphasizing the importance of teaching experience, education courses and the educational function of the counselor and low scores tend to a psychological viewpoint. On this factor school psychologists were not significantly different from counselor educators and supervisors or counselors but they tended to a psychological viewpoint significantly more than school administrators.

TABLE 4

A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF VARIOUS GROUPS ON FACTOR III SCORE (DISCIPLINE COMMITMENT)*

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision N=291	24.7	8.8
Members of the American Psychological Association - Division of School Psychology N=74	25.4	7.1
Members of the American School Counselor Association N=289	26.7	7.4
Members of the American Association of School Administrators N=287	32.7	4.7

* Low score tends to psychological viewpoint; high score to educational viewpoint.

Table 5 shows the scores of the various groups on Factor IV (clinical emphasis). High scores indicate a non-clinical approach whereas low scores tend to a clinical

TABLE 5

A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS ON FACTOR IV SCORE (CLINICAL EMPHASIS)*

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of the American Association of School Administrators N=287	14.0	4.3
Members of the American School Counselor Association N=289	15.2	4.5
Members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision N=291	17.3	4.7
Members of the American Psychological Association - Division of School Psychology N=74	19.5	4.8

* Low score tends to clinical approach; high score to non-clinical approach.

approach, emphasizing clinical psychology courses and work with emotionally disturbed students in a clinical setting. On this factor, school psychologists favored a non-clinical approach significantly more than each of the other groups.

Table 6 shows the scores of the various groups on Factor V (type of student contact). High scores tend to an emphasis on the information-giving role of the counselor

TABLE 6

A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS ON FACTOR V SCORE (STUDENT CONTACT)*

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision N=291	5.1	2.7
Members of the American School Counselor Association N=289	6.8	2.6
Members of the American Association of School Administrators N=287	7.2	2.3
Members of the American Psychological Association - Division of School Psychology N=74	13.2	2.3

*Low score tends to personal and educational counseling; high score to information-giving.

and low scores to an emphasis on personal and educational counseling. On this factor, school psychologists favored the information-giving role significantly more than each of the other groups, including even school administrators.

Discussion

One explanation for the pattern of the school psychologists' scores may be found in the area of role perception. One tends to see the roles of others from a perceptual framework in which one's own role is the center. When another person's role overlaps with one's own, the tendency is to emphasize differences in role in order to maintain a consistent role perception. The result is a clear, formal perceptual differentiation of roles despite the fact that, in reality, they may not be so clearly distinct.

Perhaps this phenomenon may explain why school psychologists did not follow the pattern which would be expected on the basis of training and experience even though these two variables had earlier been shown to be significant. For example, defining

the counselor as a specialist in counseling might be perceived by school psychologists as one of the gray areas. If the counselor's unique contribution is in the one-to-one counseling relationship, some may assume that other school specialists are automatically excluded from similar activities. This is one area where the roles of school psychologists and counselors overlap. The respondents may have been attempting to differentiate between the roles by emphasizing other generalist-type activities as integral parts of the counselor's role.

The scores of school psychologists on other factors seem to indicate the same tendency. On Factor I they emphasize a broader role definition than counselor educators, thereby making the counselor's role more distinct from their own.

Smith ( ) has demonstrated that those with more training seem to be more individual-centered than institution-centered. Yet school psychologists with extensive training would see the counselor as being more institution-centered, more authoritarian and as engaging in counseling on a part-time basis. Again, these elements would tend to differentiate between their roles.

Despite the above-mentioned pattern, school psychologists would like the counselor to emphasize psychology courses in his training and they tend to minimize the importance of teaching experiences as a prerequisite for counseling. If these things were accomplished, it would seem that an even greater problem of role differentiation would occur. Perhaps, on this factor, loyalty to a field of study was a more important consideration than role differentiation.

On Factor IV, where a clinical emphasis for the counselor would definitely overlap with the role of the school psychologist, the response again was in the direction of role differentiation. Even more than counselor educators and supervisors, school psychologists underlined the fact that counselors should not be working with emotionally disturbed students in a clinical setting. In the same way, on Factor V they emphasized the information-giving role of the counselor more than any other group, thereby minimizing the personal and educational counseling aspects of the counselor's role.

Conclusions

The responses of school psychologists concerning the school counselor's role seem to reflect a tendency toward role differentiation. In the actual school situation, the roles of these two groups overlap in some areas. The tendency of school psychologists is to emphasize the activities of counselors which do not overlap with theirs and to define the counselor's role in these terms. If school counselors were polled concerning their attitudes toward the role of the school psychologist, it is probable that the same tendency would be found.

These results point to the possibility that friction between these two groups may stem from difficulties in role perception. To avoid friction, the unique contributions of both groups should be stressed. On the other hand, where activities overlap, it should not be assumed that the performance of such activities by one group excludes the other group from making a contribution in similar activities.